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SUBJECT: LAKHDAR BRAHIMI BRIEFS AMBASSADOR KHALILZAD ON THE
REPORT BY THE INDEPENDENT PANEL ON SAFETY AND SECURITY OF
UNITED NATIONS PERSONNEL AND PREMISES.

REF: USUN New York 255

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad; Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Lakhdar Brahimi, Chairman of the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel and Premises, briefed Ambassador Khalilzad June 9 on the major findings of the Panel's just-completed report that was prepared in the aftermath of the December 2007 bombing of a UN facility in Algiers, Algeria in which 17 UN staff were killed. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon established the Panel to review increasing risks to the safety and security of UN personnel, to assess specifically what happened in Algiers, and to determine whether the Algiers bombing could have been prevented. Brahimi reported the existence of serious management issues in the Department of Safety and Security (DSS) under the leadership of David Vaness and noted that a follow-up audit of DSS may be necessary. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) The Independent Panel on Safety and Security of UN Personnel and Premises has completed its report on the security of UN premises in the wake of the December 2007 bombing of the UN facility in Algiers, Algeria. The 80-page confidential report was presented to Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon on June 9 for his review. The Panel, established by the SYG to review security arrangements around the world, began its work on March 1. In addition to Brahimi, the Panel members included Elsayed Ibrahime Elsayid Mohamed Elhabbal (Egypt); Anil Kumar Gupta (India); Unit Pamir (Turkey); Thomas Boy Sinabde (South Africa); and Margareta Wahlstrom (Sweden).

13. (C) Brahimi told Ambassador Khalilzad that at least three individual UN officers submitted reports concerning the security situation in Algiers prior to the bombing and that those reports went unheeded. In addition to the well-known reports from Babacar Ndiaye, the DSS security officer in Algiers, who warned of a possible terrorist attack, at least two other UN officials conveyed their concerns to UN Headquarters. The other reports came from a desk officer who covered West Africa and the Secretary General's Special Representative for the Western Sahara, who reportedly said that "Algiers was an accident waiting to happen." The lack of any discernible action by DSS constitutes "a failure of leadership," according to Brahimi.

14. (C) The Algiers bombing was the most deadly attack against a UN facility since the establishment of DSS. Brahimi told Ambassador Khalilzad that significant management problems existed within DSS. David Vaness, the Under Secretary-General for Safety and Security, is said to be at odds with his deputy, Diana Russler. Vaness' heavy travel schedule, which takes him away from the office some three weeks of every month, has contributed to a lack of oversight. In his absence, little is accomplished, in part because of the friction between Vaness and Russler.

15. (C) The terms of reference for the Brahimi report did not

include a mandate to establish accountability for possible security failures relating to the bombing. The UN Staff Union has expressed concerns about possible security failures in its February 22, 2008 letter (reftel). Brahimi told Khalilzad that the UN is now seen as a target, rather than an independent and impartial organization.

¶6. (C) The Brahimi report is with SYG Ban for his review. The Secretary-General has indicated to Brahimi that he would like the report to be made public, but others may wish to keep it confidential. Brahimi told Khalilzad that a subsequent audit will be needed if there is to be any true inquiry into the Algiers bombing.

Khalilzad